

2003 Transportation Summit Planning Team

Experts Comment on

COMMUNICATION, PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND CONCIOUSNESS- RAISING

COMMUNICATION, PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AND CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING

September 29, 2003

8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Secondary Center, Lake Michigan Conference Room, Lansing, MI

AGENDA

WELCOME

Facilitator: Larry Tibbits, MDOT Chief Deputy Director

Discussion Moderators:

Robert Risser, Michigan Concrete Paving Association
Nancy Krupiarz, Rails to Trails Conservancy of Michigan

EXPERTS SPEAKING ON THE ISSUES

Evolution and Future of Michigan Department of Transportation Communications

Ben Kohrman, Director of Communications
Michigan Department of Transportation

Incident Management Communications

Eileen Phifer, Safety Administrator,
Michigan Department of Transportation

Community Involvement in the Michigan Department of Transportation's Transportation Service Centers

Mark Chaput, University Region Engineer,
Michigan Department of Transportation

Citizen's Guide to Transportation Decision Making

Carmine Palombo, Director of Transportation
Programs, Southeast Michigan Council of
Governments (SEMCOG)

A Model for Public Involvement in Transportation Decisions: Southwest Region's "Non-Motorized" Study

Connie Morrison, Supervisor, Intermodal
Services Unit, Michigan Department of
Transportation Bureau of Planning

Consciousness- Raising Through Media Involvement

Roger Martin, President
Rossman, Martin, and Associates

What Does the Public Want?

Ed Sarpolus, Vice President, EPIC-MRA

PLANNING ITEMS

Planning Team's Comments on the Issues

Drafting the Issues, Goals and Action Plans

Evolution and Future of MDOT Communications

Expert Speaker: **Ben Kohrman, Director of Communications, MDOT**

Speaker's Background

- Ben's background is in politics and communications.
 - Upon accepting his current position, he was excited to learn about the transportation system and the people involved.
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Evolution of Communications

- Ben briefly discussed the evolution of communications and touched upon the major areas in which MDOT communicates.
 - Ben referred to two handout publications (two volumes of the MDOT Hi-Lighter from 1980).
 - The publications have great pictures and you can look back in terms of evolution, how the graphic style is different from today, and yet some things are similar.
 - Relationships with people have always been important to MDOT, with a strong emphasis on the lives of the people who work at MDOT.
 - Most of the work MDOT does is accomplished through technology.
 - These publications show that MDOT has been working with technology for the last 25 years.
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What We Do Now at MDOT

- Press releases are issued publicly.
- Use of the Internet.
- Information is posted on MDOT's website, such as the Lane Closure website which is now statewide. This website was in the Detroit area for about one year before going statewide (most information is posted in a 2 hour timeframe).
- Director's Pothole Hotline is also on the website, along with a 1-800 number to call to report potholes on state trunk lines.
- Most of the pothole reports called in is on roads that are not state trunklines; however, MDOT reports these calls to the local counties, townships, etc.
- Pothole reports have decreased during the summer months; however, there will probably be an increase in calls during the spring months.
- MDOT uses website for study projects.
- Internally MDOT is always working on how to do "communication" better, constantly reevaluating the effectiveness of the communication tools available.
- MDOT has developed a wide range of media relationships.
- The Director does media interviews.
- MDOT gets experts comments to the media.

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**What We Do
Now at
Michigan
Department of
Transportation,
*Continued***

- MDOT also meets with editorial boards around the state on broader issues.
- An effective communication tool is one-on-one conversations.
- MDOT TV is on at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday's and focuses on the broad spectrum of what the department does and its many different functions.
- A main focus of MDOT is how transportation affects people's lives.
- MDOT makes sound bites available for radio spots throughout the state.
- Not one communication tool that MDOT uses is mutually exclusive; MDOT uses a combination of methods for effective communication.
- There is no such thing as overexposure in media; however, the Director has asked to be notified if some transportation issues become overexposed.
- Ben stated that there is lots of clutter in media and the challenge for effective communication is to cut through the clutter.
- The availability of media is an effective communication tool that should be used to the advantage of MDOT.
- The nine issues of the Transportation Summit are interrelated and not easily communicated in one sentence.
- Internal communications
- Very effective internet – always working on upgrading
- Not everyone has an email – i.e., field staff – how to get these messages to these people – one of our internal challenges
- Monday memo displayed at the Transportation Service Centers
- Reach the folks doing the actual work.
- MDOT Today is available – holding off on printing – make available to those in it
- Monday Memo – include info on people, policies, government issues
- Irregular but frequently used directive from the Director
- Another way we communicate is informally – face-to-face
- Definitely increase work productivity
- Never will be a substitute for personal interactions
- Communicate with a lot of meetings
- Focus meetings
- Observation – internal communication an imperfect science – can always make it better – look at ways to communicate more effectively – ongoing process
- Interagency & organizational communication
- Other organizations – transportation and broader community – issue a publication twice a month
- Between organizations – a lot of person-to-person contact
- Conversations between department directors

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**What We Do
Now at MDOT,
*Continued***

- Observation – improve our communication in all areas – summit learn about interagency communications – action steps from the summit – what we learn about each other will improve communication

Evolution

- How we're focusing on the department as a manager and a leader of a transportation system – how it affects people and their way of life
 - How important transportation is to our lives
 - How various organizations and agencies interact in emergencies
-

**Internal
Communications**

- The use of the internet is also a very effective internal communication tool.
- Michigan Department of Transportation (Michigan Department of Transportation) has an internal website for its staff and is always working on upgrading this website.
- Not everyone at MDOT has email access, i.e., field staff.
- The communication challenge is how to get messages to these people.
- One of MDOT's communication tools is the "*Monday Memo*." A hard copy is displayed at the Transportation Service Centers in a prominent location that is accessible to field staff. The "*Monday Memo*" is also available on MDOT's internal website.
- MDOT realizes the importance of communicating with the "folks" doing the actual work.
- The "*Monday Memo*" includes information on people in the department, policies, and governmental issues
- Another communication tool is "*MDOT Today*" which is also available on the internal website; however, due to budget restrictions printing and distribution of hard copies is on hold. Upon request, a hard copy can be made available.
- *Direct from the Director* is another communication tool used by MDOT.
- Another form of communication at MDOT is informally, face-to-face contact in meetings, conferences, etc.
- Effective communication definitely increases work productivity.
- There will never be a substitute for personal interactions.
- Meetings are another effective communication tool within MDOT.
- Ben made an observation that internal communication is an imperfect science that can always be made better.
- MDOT is always looking at ways to communicate more effectively; this is an ongoing process.
- Interagency and organizational communication is also used by MDOT staff.
- MDOT issues a bi-weekly publication to outside transportation organizations and the broader community.

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**Internal
Communications,
*Continued***

- Person-to-person contact between outside organizations is an effective communication tool used by MDOT staff.
 - Conversations between department directors
 - Observation – improve our communication in all areas – summit learn about interagency communications – action steps from the summit – what we learn about each other will improve communication
 - Evolution
 - How we're focusing on the department as a manager and a leader of a transportation system – how it affects people and their way of life
 - How important transportation is to our lives
 - How various organizations and agencies interact in emergencies
-

**External
Communications**

- Interagency and organizational communication is also used by MDOT staff.
 - MDOT issues a bi-weekly publication to outside transportation organizations and the broader community.
 - Person-to-person contact between outside organizations is an effective communication tool used by MDOT staff.
 - Conversation between department directors is a statewide communication tool.
 - Ben's observation is that MDOT is always trying to improve communication in all areas.
 - At the Transportation Summit, MDOT should learn more about interagency communications.
 - An action step from the Transportation Summit will be what we learn about each other will improve communication between various organizations, local governments, and the public.
 - Communication is always evolving.
 - MDOT is communicating how we are focusing on the Department as being a manager and a leader of a transportation system and how it affects people and their way of life.
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Incident Management Communications

Expert Speaker: Eileen Phifer, Safety Administrator, MDOT

Emergency Communication and Coordination

Communication in Emergency Management – Federal, Local and State

- Communication in an emergency is critical.
 - Communication is one component of emergency management.
 - Focus on the relaying of information between agencies and MDOT.
 - Communicate what happens in an emergency and relay that information pertinent people, organizations, etc.
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Flooding

- Slide shows pictures of different areas in the state that have had flooding emergencies, i.e., the City of Marquette in the Upper Peninsula.
 - Flooding happens fairly regularly in Michigan.
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Train Derailment

- Slide shows pictures of a train derailment in Pottersville, where the entire town had to be evacuated.
 - Trains may carry toxic chemicals which result in an Emergency Management System being used.
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Thunder Storms and Tornadoes

- Slide shows pictures of the Village of Clemens after a tornado ripped through town took out almost every building, and of a thunderstorm which can cause blackouts.
- MDOT had a road that went through the Village of Clemens; a coordinated effort led by MDOT with local agencies was used to repair the road.

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- Power outages are another transportation emergency situation, i.e., traffic lights out, etc.
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Ice Storms

- Slide shows a picture of an ice storm.
 - Ice storms and blizzards are other transportation emergency situations.
 - For example, a blizzard near Jackson caused a 72 car pile up on I-94 during white out conditions; MDOT along with the Michigan State Police were involved in the emergency management situation.
 - Federal Motor Carrier Division of the Michigan State Police and MDOT also work together in emergency management situations.
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Nuclear Power Plants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slide shows pictures of nuclear power plants in Michigan. • Michigan has three nuclear power plants throughout the state.
Explosions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slide shows a picture of train tanker on fire. • Small or large emergency situations; it doesn't matter there is still a need for effective communication between agencies.
What Currently Happens...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MDOT maintains call lists for emergency response. • Statewide coordination of MDOT issues through the MDOT Emergency Management Coordinator. • Flexible communication within the current structure. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MDOT has one major list with two to three subsets to this list. - You can never have enough phone numbers. - Lists must be current and updated continuously. - Tim Jones is MDOT's Emergency Management Coordinator. - MDOT use the emergency management system frequently; regular use for small and large events.
Relay Information – Emergency Operations Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State and MDOT Emergency Operation Centers. • Provide a Public Information Officer. • Communicate needs to the SEOC or the MDOT EOC, if activated. • SEOC briefings and updates for all state agencies. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - During the recent blackout everyone met at the Emergency Operation Center. - Coordinated responses. - Some events are small events – not necessarily activated through the state; done through MDOT's Emergency Operations Division.
Incident Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide on-scene and site specific coordination. • Contact first responders to protect the public. • MDOT communicates with appropriate staff for the response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Management ○ Direct Forces or Contractors - During a tanker explosion, the emergency management system team was comprised of on-scene personnel, state contractors (particular to the event), with contacts to local agencies and coordinators. - MDOT Coordination is done through our Chief Operations Officer - In a transportation emergency, MDOT will direct forces on the ground and bring in other agencies such as the Michigan State Police.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Updated Policies / Procedures.

with Local Agencies

- Communication with Local Agencies.
 - Give detailed but concise information.
 - MDOT has procedures in place for road closures.
 - MDOT notifies the appropriate people, agencies, etc.
 - MDOT has good communication with various road agencies, which are comprised of a lot of contract employees.
 - When notifying MDOT of local road closures, more detail such as what type of road closure, how many lanes to be closed, etc. is important for effective communication to the public.
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Local and State Coordination

- Local Emergency Coordinators
 - Local Road Agencies
 - State Police District Coordinators
 - MDOT / Region Emergency Coordinators
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Thank You!

Eileen M. Phifer
MDOT Safety Administrator
517/373-1898

Q & A

(Answered by Ben Kohrman and Eileen Phifer)

- Q. Do you handle communication with public transportation providers?
- A. Yes to some extent, MDOT has people that are experts who make sure the right two people are communicating.
- Q. What happens when the power outage affects electronic communication; when electronic communication is “dicey?”
- A. MDOT has multiple layers of communication which has been tested numerous times. During the latest blackout MDOT was able to use phones and fax machines.

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Q & A,

Continued

Two-way radio systems are also used. There are always two or three backups available for different methods of communication.

- Q. Two of the four items deal with public involvement and public awareness, how does the State filter information down to the public, what is the linkage?
- A. MDOT is decentralized in all seven regions. Email as a tool is very effective. MDOT makes sure the public knows about our email address. Phone calls from the public are routed through the Communication Division. The Communication Division is “moving grass roots up” passes on information the needs to go to the Governor’s office in a timely manner. The Communications Division can immediately get information from the Executive Office to the regions. MDOT has a good system of getting information to people.

- Q. A few weeks ago a bomb threat was made to the international bridge, where does this fall in the scale of emergencies?
- A. In a bomb threat situation the potential is there to activate the MDOT Emergency Operations Center. MDOT typically follows protocol and works with the Michigan State Police and the FBI. If MDOT is at a point to activate the Emergency Operations Center, we would.
- Q. Two of the goals we have collectively is ensuring the public that we are giving them a quality product, understanding the user fee concept, how is MDOT getting this message out and how we can do better in that regard?
- A. MDOT is a good steward to the taxpayer's money. Pays attention to where we are with the budget and timeframe. One example, by working with the contractors and combining two jobs into one MDOT saved \$5 million dollars on a project that came in early and the region acknowledged this by presenting a check to MDOT for \$5 million. User fees cause a lot of public policy ramifications there is no have a direct answer, however, the Transportation Summit is an ideal place for everyone to talk about it and learn how it plays with different folks and different regions.
- Q. We see a lot more day-to-day activity put on the operation end; people are anticipating technology to provide information instantaneously, what kinds of challenge is it to be in the continuous information business?
- A. With emergency management we know what's going on right away and we try to give briefings on regular basis. These briefings will include that this is where we currently are and that there will be another briefing in a ½ hour for further updates. This is better than speculating. There is a huge media capacity and people expect to get information right away, however, the appetite for information is much greater than the information that actually exists.

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**Q & A,
Continued**

It is more important to get the right information out vs. how much information is out there, the wrong thing can get magnified fairly quickly through the media. The act of getting it right is in conflict with the act of getting it now.

- Q. There is greater awareness since 9/11 and there is more importance of the northern borders. If an incidence occurs at the border which would cause closing the bridge, this would affect Michigan and the country's economics since Michigan's authority stops at the state line, how would we deal with this?
- A. MDOT does have a call list, with our Canadian partners, that was developed prior to 9/11. Tabletop exercises with partners have been done. We would bring in partners and people involved quickly and get people out in the field with accurate information.

Community Involvement in MDOT's Transportation Service Centers

Expert Speaker: **Mark Chaput, University Region Engineer, MDOT**

Community Involvement

- Transportation Service Centers Taking the Lead
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Michigan's Transportation System

- Statewide Lane Miles – 120,000 miles
 - Statewide Bridges – 10,806
 - State System – 9,700 Miles – Bridges – 4,325
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MDOT Manages State System

- Stewardship Responsibility
 - System Safety
 - Operational Serviceability
 - Accountability to tax payers
 - Transportation Service Center (TSC) are the Front Line (26 statewide)
 - Transportation Service Center deal with all aspects of the transportation system.
 - The purpose of the TSC is to get closer to customers, be a part of the community.
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Why Involve the Community?

- Community Awareness
 - Know what's impacting them.
 - Input and Inclusion on Implementation
 - How MDOT goes about implementing, combining projects.
 - Coordination Opportunities
 - How MDOT coordinate projects that are close together.
 - Partnership Opportunities
 - Getting joint projects done with different municipalities and utilities.
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Who is the Community?

- Municipalities
 - County Governments
 - Business Partners
 - Associated Industry Partners
 - General Public / Citizens
 - Motorists
 - Residents
 - Taxpayers
 - Everyone who uses the transportation system in Michigan.
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***How Do We
Involve Them?***

- Program Level
 - Allocating statewide budgets.
 - Project Level
 - Input from our customers.
 - Corridor Planning
 - Working with communities and regional areas.
 - Long range investment plans or some aesthetic pattern.
 - Special Projects
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**Program
Involvement**

- 5 Year Plan Development / Announcement
 - Statewide ability
 - Seven regions statewide
 - How we will invest the money
 - Setting budgets
 - Formal announcements of 5 year plan
 - What we have planned and how we are working on it.
 - Annual Traffic Summits – TSC sponsored
 - Project Coordination
 - Meetings with local partners and utilities.
 - Maintaining Traffic Coordination
 - Meetings on a routine basis.
 - Make sure we are making the right decisions.
 - Need of motoring public into account.
 - TIP / STIP Processes (TIP = Transportation Improvement Process)
(STIP = State Transportation Improvement Process)
 - Rural Task Force (RTF)
 - Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
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Project Level

- Planning and Design Meetings
 - Coordinating Joint Project Opportunities
 - Traffic Coordination with other Projects
 - Coordination with Private / Public Utilities
 - Routine, we provide with every project.
 - Specifics addressed
 - Enhancement opportunities
 - Aesthetics opportunities
 - Unique Features
-

**M-61 Bridge
over Tobacco
River, Gladwin**

- Before and after pictures of an enhanced bridge reconstruction.
- Discussed in much detail with the local community
 - What type of aesthetics?
 - Accomplished through coordinated meetings with local community.

**Scotten Road
over US-12 in
Detroit**

- Picture of an aesthetic bridge reconstruction.

**Glen Arbor
Bridge, Leelanau
County &
Beulah Bridge,
Benzie County**

- Pictures of other completed bridge projects in Michigan with unique features.

**Corridor
Approach**

- Access Management
- Consistent Design Standards
 - Roadway Design
 - Community Roadside Design
- Construction Permit Process
- Private / Public Partnerships

**Telegraph
Tomorrow
Association**

- US-24 Corridor through Wayne County
 - Example of corridor group
 - On-going association
 - Membership dues
- Seven Community Members
- 15 to 20 Associate (Private) Members
- Accomplishments
 - Roadside Design Standards
 - Sample Overlay Ordinance
 - Corridor Inventories
 - Concept Plans (Communities / MDOT)

Corridor Groups

- Scenic Heritage Route Committees
- Access Management Corridor Committees
- Woodward Avenue Association (Oakland)
- 8 Mile Road Association (Wayne County)
- Traverse Area Chamber Transportation Committee
- M-20 Alliance (Mt. Pleasant)
- US-127 Corridor Committee (Mid Michigan)

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Special Projects Enhancement Program

- Landscaping Opportunities
 - Non-Motorized Facilities
 - Local / County / State / Joint Projects
- Regional Approach
- Task Forces
 - Summits
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**Non-Motorized
Facilities – US-
127BR Clare
County**

Before and after pictures of a non-motorized facility.

**US-23 Bike Path,
Presque Isle
County & US-31
Bike Path,
Charlevoix
County**

Before and after pictures of bike paths in Michigan.

**Streetscape
Examples**

Pictures of M-43 in Kalamazoo and US-12 in Ypsilanti.

**Roadside
Landscaping**

Picture of City of Southgate, Wayne County.

**Detroit Regional
Gateway
Advisory
Council
(DRGAC)**

Focus is along I-94 from Metro Airport to Downtown Detroit

Issues of Concern

- Overall Appearance
 - System Operations
 - System Safety
- Private Investment Recruiting (Pool donations from 50 Corporations)
 - Investment Planning
 - Improvement Implementation Planning
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DRGAC Active Public Members Detroit Regional Gateway Advisory Council's Public Members include:

- MDOT
 - MEDC
 - Detroit Convention and Visitors Bureau
 - Detroit Renaissance Corporation
 - Wayne County
 - City of Detroit
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DRGAC – Leadership Roles from Private Sector

Council Chair – Larry Yost (Arvin Meritor)
Committee Chairman:
Frank Fountain – Daimler Chrysler
Tim O'Brien – Ford Motor Company
Paul Hillegonds – Detroit Renaissance
Jack Barthwell – Motor City Casino

I-94 Gateway Bridge over US-24 (City of Taylor)

Picture of Gateway Bridge design, coming in 2004.
- Groups and city have picked up excess funds.

MDOT – Transportation Service Center Focus

As we address System Needs

- Improve Safety
- Operational Serviceability
- Achieve Cost Effective Solutions
- Impact Overall Quality of Life

Community Inclusion and Involvement

Enables the U.S. to Manage the Overall Transportation System and Affect Change in Context with the Surrounding Communities

Q & A

- Q. What is the difference between types of comments, community involvement at the different levels?
- A. The main thing is perspective. Transportation Service Centers are looking more at regional activities, more of a community issue. Within MDOT common understanding and goals.

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Q & A,
Continued

- Q. US-127 Corridor Group, is this the same group working on the I-73 project and are they still active as a group?
- A. No direct information, the I-73 corridor study is complete at this point.
- Q. Feedback from local agencies and municipalities that they like the Transportation Service Centers (TSCs), any competition?
- A. TSCs were developed for local interaction. Feedback was very positive, communities perceive TSCs as partners. Local communities look to TSCs to help solve problems.
- Q. Where can the community get involved in the project, where can they have some impact on their desire on natural resources/features?
- A. MDOT holds scoping meetings and design meetings. MDOT starts addressing environmental impacts at the scoping and design meetings. The community needs to get involved during the environmental process.
- Q. During the planning and environmental assessment process can communities look at the specifics of the project?
- A. MDOT goes through a series of alternative evaluations which are discussed at public meetings. This helps determine what process is used.
- Q. How are the public notified of these meetings?
- A. MDOT sends invitations to groups, information is posted on the website, ads in newspapers. There are many avenues of communication that MDOT uses for notification.
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Citizens Guide to Transportation Decision Making

Expert Speaker: **Carmine Palombo, Director of Transportation Programs,
Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG)**

Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG)

SEMCOG established a Public Involvement Task Force in 2000 to review the SEMCOG public involvement process and make recommendations on how to improve the process.

One of the findings of the task force was that for there to be effective public involvement, the public needed to understand the process and where they could be most effective in making their comments heard.

- One of the problems was that a lot of money was being spent on public input and not getting anything out of it.
 - What can we do to spend less money and receive more input.
 - Group met for 6-8 months where there was a lot of discussion involving the public in decision making, i.e., enhancing web site, more direct mailings, documents in different languages for ethnic population, 1-800 phone number, legal ads in newspapers.
 - We changed our strategy to talking more with reporters and getting free advertising in newspapers, we went to editorial boards.
 - People came to meetings and were interested in doing 1 of 3 things: 1) support a project, 2) kill a project, and 3) find out why the project 'I' want is not there.
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Citizens Guide to Transportation Planning in Southeast Michigan

As a result, SEMCOG developed "A Citizens Guide to Transportation Planning in Southeast Michigan" in February of 2001.

- The purpose of the Guide is to outline the broad picture of regional planning in Southeast Michigan for the public. We wanted to familiarize the public with the activities of SEMCOG and identify how and where they could participate in the transportation planning process in a meaningful way.
 - The real way to get input was to explain what the regional planning process was (the intent of this document).
 - It identifies the process to develop both our 2025 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and the regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) – specifically for Southeast Michigan. It also includes a glossary of terms that we commonly use that we maintain on our web site.
 - Processes are different across the state and with federal government.
 - There are 250 local units of government and seven counties in southeast Michigan.
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- It is important to outline the whole process because the basic message to the public is that sooner and closer to home you become involved in the project, the greater the opportunity you have to impact the project. By the time the project is recommended for approval by the MPO in the Plan or the TIP, there are fewer opportunities to positively impact the project.
 - Direct the public where they need to go for direct/local contacts/information on a certain project, etc.
 - This guide is the first step of the entire planning process, it gives the citizens explanation of the process, who is involved, etc.

Promotion and Distribution

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- We printed about 20,000 copies and gave them out at meetings, through our Information Services Department, and at various public events. We quickly ran through the first printing of 20,000. We have since reprinted an additional 10,000 and run through those as well. In addition, many other people have downloaded the guide from our web site.
 - We're promoting the process described by focusing on early, local level public involvement for our 2030 RTP.
 - We are developing the 2030 Transportation Plan using the policies in this guide.
 - The document has been well received by the public and we think it has helped to develop a more informed public.
 - People are starving for information on a lot of different issues today and they go to the internet to get information.
 - We need them to talk to us directly and share their point of view, where they received their information from, let them know who's information is best.
 - Get everyone on the same playing field.
 - This process has worked out well for Southeast Michigan.
 - In fact a 3-year improvement project was approved last week.
 - This is a \$3 billion dollar program.
 - There were lots of discussions and meetings.
 - The intensity of discussions was down at these meetings due to the public being educated about the process through this guide.
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- We will be revising and reprinting the document in the next year.
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A Model for Public Involvement in Transportation Decisions: Southwest Region's "Non-Motorized" Study

Expert Speaker: **Connie Morrison, Supervisor, Intermodal Services Unit,
MDOT Bureau of Planning**

- SW Region Non-Motorized (NM) Investment Plan**
- Integrate non-motorized considerations into MDOT's SW Region planning and project development decisions
 - Reflect local non-motorized preferences and priorities
 - Did not want to exclude non-motorized projects.
 - Request came from outside of MDOT.
 - Invites were sent out through the scoping mechanism.
 - Non-motorized projects have different needs.
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- SW Region NM Investment Plan Design**
- Needed two types of information to provide the context for each project:
- What types of people were likely to use the facility?
 - What other facilities or systems will this connect to?
 - TSC Managers needed a couple of pieces of contact information.
 - Were they cyclists, families, young / old, recreation, etc.?
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- SW Region NM Investment Planning**
- We knew the needs and preferences varied widely across the nine-county area and decided the best way to collect that information was to hold a series of workshops and ... *ask the people who would be using the facilities.*
- Kalamazoo has a group of commuter cyclists that cycle in all types of weather.
 - Berrien and Van Buren have recreations cyclists who are developing trails in the area.
 - We wanted to reflect and understand, to ask the people.
 - When the RFP was developed one of the main components was to collect information and have comprehensive plan for public involvement.
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- SW Region NM Investment Plan Events**
- Consultant – T. Y. Lin International and Suzan A. Pinsof & Associates - engaged a public events coordinator to handle meeting logistics
- 1,000 individuals, agencies and organizations were invited to one of seven meetings held throughout the nine county region.
 - Extent of public involvement was a major component of the proposal.
 - Worked with different groups like Nancy Krupiarz's, Rails to Trails group.
 - Needed input from school districts, universities, chamber of commerce, business, government, pedestrians or cyclists.

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| SW Region NM
Investment Plan
Communications | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Letters & postcards• Public service announcements• Newspaper public interest stories• Phone calls• Postings in bike shops• Word of mouth• Advocacy groups' e-mail<ul style="list-style-type: none">- These are some of the different notification processes.- Email was probably the most effective communication form with the cyclists. |
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| SW Region NM
Investment Plan
Participants | <p>115 participants representing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Government agencies• Tourism/business interests• Education• Safety• Non-motorized advocacy interests• 'Regular folks' <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Some regular folks that had an interest attended.- Asked people to identify where are the non-motorized facilities already are and if they are on the map.- In some cases, there were facilities that were missed on the map.- Identify where there were non-motorized plans in place that MDOT did not know about.- Need some official sanction to be included in someone's long range plan, or city's plan.- Inventory of cities and village and where they had things in place like sidewalk plans, etc.- Where there may be things developing in the future.- Citizens what was important to them. What to connect to and to get around specific features that were obstacles |
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| SW Region NM
Investment Plan | <p>Follow-up Public Meetings in June</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ To display recent versions of inventory maps of each of the nine counties |
|---|--|

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- To solicit input for alterations to MDOT's project scoping checklist and concept statement forms
 - Reflected needs addressed during the March workshops and throughout the duration of the project.
 - Informed public of MDOT's process for assessing project costs and priorities.
 - To ask: Did we hear you right? – Did we get it right?
-

**SW Region NM
Investment Plan**

- Follow up Meetings in June (cont)
 - Propose a sequence for handling non-motorized projects with a connection to the inventory
 - Present a proposed candidate project submission form
 - Transportation Service Center Managers were overwhelmed by the number of requests by the public.
 - Partners of this non-motorized, you have responsibility too, such as whom is it going to serve, what it will connect. A form was designed by MDOT to address all the issues.
-

The New Process

- Slide of project development process.
- Mirrors the project development process right now.
 - Can come from the outside but with documentation.
 - There are big changes in this process.
 - MDOT needs to know what you or we are trying to accomplish up front. Then we will be able to select the correct path for the project.
-

**SW Region NM
Investment Plan**

- Elements of Effective Public Involvement:
- 1) Clearly-defined purpose & objectives
 - 2) Identification of affected public and stakeholder groups
 - 3) Identification of techniques for engaging the public
 - Pulled from the Federal Highways website.
 - Several different techniques used during public workshops.

**SW Region NM
Investment Plan**

- Elements of Effective Public Involvement:
- 1) Notification procedures which effectively target affected groups
 - 2) Techniques that help the public understand the problem, potential solutions, obstacles and opportunities
 - 3) Follow through by public agencies
 - Number of notification techniques used and were very good.
 - Two aspects used were follow-up meetings and implementation of the plan itself.
-

SW Region NM Investment Plan Evaluation

Under-represented groups

- Private citizens
- Amish community
 - It would have been nice to have a few more “regular” folks.
 - Did not reach the Amish community – they are a harder group to reach.
 - Represented a nine county area.

What could we have done better?

- Held more evening sessions
- Made the meetings more local
- Held more sessions
- Targeted specific audiences where we knew transportation was a barrier
 - Most of the meetings were morning or very late afternoon, needed to schedule morn evening meetings.
 - Nine county area with only seven meetings, need to schedule more local meetings through out the area.
 - Needed to speak to the Amish community and some urban communities.
 - A large portion of the study money went to the public participation part of this, could have saved money by using local areas’ churches, schools, etc. for meeting facilities.

What did we do well?

- We asked!
- We identified – and went to – a broad range of stakeholders
- Used appropriate notification
- We continue to update and work on implementation
 - The map that came along with this group, came along this fall and is currently being updated.

Q & A

Q. Citizens Guide is a terrific marketing too. Do other Metropolitan Planning Organizations in Michigan have a similar document to get information out to people?

A. SEMCOG presented the document to all Metropolitan Planning Organizations; some are starting similar documents.

Q. How difficult is SEMCOG’s process to implement in other areas of the state?

A. It should be easy to define the process in other areas of the state.

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- Q. It is the conclusion of our speakers and the people of our audience that local citizens are not taking part; how do we get them to get involved?
- A. This is the age of information. The expectation is that if I want to know something about any subject, there should be some place I can go to get this information; furthermore, there is the added expectation that I should have an opportunity to impact every decision made. If you don't provide people with an opportunity to educate themselves (what the process is), they'll get the information somewhere else (perhaps the wrong information). The challenge is to find the best medium to provide the most information that you can. Most people don't understand the process and planning part of transportation, so the connection just doesn't get made. There is not a lot of involvement until you have a list of projects. Then, that's when people get involved.
-

Consciousness-Raising through Media Involvement

Expert Speaker: **Roger Martin, APR, President of Rossman, Martin & Associates**

Consciousness Raising Through Media Involvement

Speaker Background: Roger's firm has been involved in transportation issues for the last 11 years including raising the gas tax. His firm brought the gas tax coalition together. Used earned media tactics on the gas tax issue. His firm's specialty area is media, worked at DFP for a lot of years and received a perspective on government. This is a crisis driven environment, out of sight is out of mind. Unless you are continuously in the media you could get lost.

Research: Framing the Issue

- Identify messages and information that move numbers, drive public opinion your way.
 - Quantitative research
 - Test messages (yours and your opponent's)
 - Measure "moods"
 - Scientific accuracy
 - Qualitative research
 - Focus groups
 - On the record/documents to prove your messages
-

Identify Key Audiences/Publics

- Who will be affected by your issue/agenda?
 - Who will benefit?
 - Who will be harmed? (Your opponents)
 - Who must take actions for you to win?
-

Develop Messages: Proof Points

- What information and messages compel your key audiences to take the actions you need them to take?
- Can you prove your messages are true? (Your opponents will work overtime trying to prove they are false.)
- Key messages – targeted at all audiences
- Secondary messages – customized for a particular audience
 - In terms of transportation, general public as major key audience.

The following are Communication Tool and Strategies to utilize:

Communications Strategies

Communication Strategies

- Do you need to be very loud, moderately loud, or quiet?
 - When do you launch?
 - Where do you launch?
 - Who are your leaders/co-chairs/spokespersons?
 - How do you launch – big bank versus low key?
 - Is a coalition approach necessary?
 - What mechanisms are in place to manage and sustain the campaign (evaluate, adjust as necessary)?
 - The louder you can be the better.
 - On-going maintenance campaign to keep the issue of transportation out there on a daily basis.
 - An awareness campaign would be a payoff in the long run.
 - When a significant level of funding is need, coalitions are almost always necessary.
 - An evaluation component needs to be in place.
-

Communication Tactics**Communication Tactics**

- What are the most effective ways to deliver your messages and information to your target audiences? What does your budget allow?
 - What tools are your opponents using, and how must you respond? Does it change your strategy?
-

Grassroots Tactics**Grassroots Tactics**

- Direct lobbying
 - Letters, phone calls and emails to legislators, regulators, the media
 - District meetings and local events
 - Fund-raising/PAC support)
-

Earned Media Tactics**Earned Media Tactics**

- You must localize the story
- News releases
- News conferences/media roundtables
- Viewpoint columns and letters to the editor
- Editorial board visits
 - Localize it in facts and figures as well as human beings.
 - Use two different versions of news releases, one for statewide and one for local distribution.
 - Large newsrooms get hundreds of news releases a day, if it is more than two pages it usually gets tossed, keep it to one page.
 - If you use TV as a medium, stay away from groups of people talking. Use posters, PowerPoint presentations, etc.

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- Viewpoint columns and letters to the editor are good tactics to keep the issue alive. Most viewpoint bylines are by prominent people in the community, etc.
 - Use editorial boards as a way to communicate to the top levels of state and local levels of government.
-

Paid Media Tactics

Paid Media Tactics

- As long as the messages are true and believed, a well-funded paid media campaign can drive public opinion.
 - Very expensive to be effective.
 - Has to be well researched and believable.
 - Average viewer will see ad 39-60 times.
-

New Media Tactics

New Media Tactics

- Web page for awareness, advocacy, and a way to deliver messages and information to the masses with no filtering.
 - CDs and DVDs. (Distribute your PowerPoint presentation on a CD. Shoot a video, turn it into DVD for mass distribution.)
-

Collateral Materials

Collateral materials

- Logo and letterhead
 - Media kits
 - Fact sheets
 - Speech/PowerPoint presentation
 - Studies/white papers
 - Brochures
 - Posters/other signage
 - T-shirts, buttons, stickers
 - And on and on ...
 - Roads and bridges issues, target outdoor advertising.
-

Earned Media

Benefits

- It's largely free – other than the fees you pay to people like me!
- It is a FAR more credible information source than paid advertisements. People are skeptical about what they read in the paper and see on TV newscasts, but they are even more skeptical about ads.
- If your agenda or issue is “big” enough, extensive media coverage can help to drive the public debate.

Earned Media cont'

Benefits, continued

- Newspaper editorial pages are not widely read. But people who read them are generally key influencers (voters, community and elected leaders, business executives, higher educated and upper income citizens).
- Let me emphasize: politicians pay attention to what's in the paper.
- You can use it to deliver localized and customized messages.
- Politicians love to be in "good news" stories.
 - Politicians pay attention to editorial pages.

Drawbacks / Challenges

Drawbacks/Challenges

- Ultimately, you have little control over how a story will look, read or sound. You can only try to control the "slant" of the story.
- Your definition of a "good story" is far different than a reporter's definition of a good story.
- Doing it right and doing it a lot takes a lot of time.
- What you are "pitching" better be newsworthy.
- Just like paid media tactics, frequency matters. It takes frequent earned media stories to actually create momentum, one way or the other, for an issue or agenda.
- Just like for roads, maintenance is critical. Out of sight is out of mind. Unless you maintain an earned media campaign, you will soon find yourself out of the news hole.
 - Got to keep it going.

Recent Campaigns

"It's the mix for the fix on 496"

- Strategy: Use earned paid media and special events to generate awareness. (Radio ads, legislators touring the construction area and concrete plant, community event at Lansing Lugnuts game, news releases, etc.) Moderately loud.

Gas tax increase 1996-97: "Just fix the roads."

- Strategy: Build a broad coalition and launch grassroots and earned media tactics to seek passage of a state gas tax increase. Research was a strong driver of this campaign (public opinion research, TRIP studies). Deafeningly loud.

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**Recent
Campaigns,
*Continued***

Examples:

Michigan Transportation Team

- Strategy: Using a broad coalition of business and transportation industry and government officials to seek increased federal funding for roads. Media events, viewpoint columns, Washington “fly ins”/direct lobbying, PAC support, etc. Relatively quiet.

The ‘Racino issue’

- Strategy: Use earned media, particularly editorial pages, to pressure the Legislature to reject bills to turn the state’s seven horse racetracks into casinos. Moderately loud (but we’re prepared to scream!)

What Does the Public Want?

Expert Speaker: Ed Sarpolus, Vice President, EPIC-MRA

The Value of Research

Research is designed to raise money, save money, kill legislation, initiate legislation, and create the public dialog to get projects on their way.

- Traffic safety people cannot lobby, but need to.
- Don't always have money to educate the public.
- Use research to educate and lobby.
- Through research we have killed the mourning dove legislation.
- Killed drilling in Michigan's lakes.
- Use research to go to vendors and groups for funding.
- Newspapers use research to sell newspapers.
- Television networks and newspapers hire EPIC-MRA to get themselves on other television networks and newspapers.
- Issues can become old, need a new life.
- Use research to get in the newspapers to identify new issues that the newspapers are willing to talk about.
- Used research to develop alternate routes for the 496 project.
- Used research to see if education was working.
- An Oakland County project was completed six months early, however, due to lack of education, people in the area did not realize the project was finished early and kept using alternate routes.
- The public never does what you ask them to do.
- Research from the railroad study for a commuter train from Lansing to Detroit showed that even though a lot of people that it was a good idea, in actuality only 5% would use it.
- Sometimes issues have to be created for people to talk about it.
- Research has many uses.

Ways Research Can Be Used

Research has many uses.

- Politician is running for office and wants short-term fix, however, research can demonstrate that the public wants a long-term solution.
- Research can be used to identify if a problem is really a problem and affect the public's perception.
- Research can measure the effectiveness of education.
- The "650" campaign used by the Michigan State Police saved lives by getting young men to use their seatbelts.
- This campaign was done with a 5 minute statewide survey. When young men called in about the "650" campaign they thought it was some sort of race and instead received message on seatbelt usage facts.

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- Public wants direct confirmation on their issue.
- Public research surveys demonstrate to the public that you sought their input.
- Research is used to identify facts in the public's mind.
- Have to use the right words. For example, youths today don't want to hear about safety, but use campaigns like the "650" and you can achieve results.
- A town in Kent County thought they had a truancy problem. When the research was done, it showed that there was no truancy problem. Public perception did not change, so a truancy board was created, now public perception is that the board is doing a good job because there aren't any truanies.
- Research showed that suburban mothers are bad drivers, because they are always running from one thing to another.
- Billboard campaigns – what are the ghost effects.
- Open hearings are only attended by 10% of those interested in the issue, the 10% that shows up are usually those with an axe to grind.

**Concerns Voiced
By Citizens of
Michigan**

Now I am going to read a list of problems and issues that people in Michigan say they are concerned about. After I read the whole list, please tell me which one problem or issue you are concerned about the most?
(READ & ROTATE 01-03 – TAKE FIRST RESPONSE ONLY)

- 24% Improving the economy and jobs
- 23% Making quality health care accessible to everyone
- 14% Controlling state taxes and spending
- 11% Improving education
- 9% Promoting morality and family values
- 7% Protecting the environment
- 4% Improving roads and highways
- 3% Controlling crime and drugs
- 3% Legalized gambling
- % More than [ASK] "But which problem concerns you the most?"
- 2% Undecided / Don't Know (DON'T READ)

**Key Points
What Research
Can Discover**

The Basics:

1. Public Priorities versus State Priorities
 - a. New versus repair current
 - b. Long term solution versus short term fix
2. Customer Satisfaction
 - a. Road quality
 - b. Construction traffic
 - c. Alternate routes
 - d. education

3. Public Solutions versus governmental
 - a. Perception of public involvement
4. Perception versus reality
5. Identify the real majority
6. Challenge the Negatives & Myths
 - a. Public opinion research creates political cover

Communication

7. Speaking in their language
 - a. Messaging
 - b. The words to use
 - c. Who to target
 - d. Campaign themes
8. Pre & Post communication tests
9. Aware tests
 - a. Ready for upcoming construction
 - b. Know the alternative routes
 - c. Know that the work is finished
10. Create a dialogue
 - a. Town Hall meetings
 - b. Radio talk shows

Raising Dollars – There is Never Enough Money

11. Earned Media
12. Newspaper special features
13. Vendor sponsorship

WILL THEY USE WHAT THEY WANT YOU TO BUILD?

Q & A

- Q. When should we launch the Transportation Summit? Campaign to increase transportation funding? Dynamics and what the challenges are?
- A. Last gas tax increase was done right before an election; however, this is entirely different. In Roger's opinion now is not a good time to go to the legislature and governor to ask for a tax increase since the economy is still not strong. Due to another tight budget year asking for an increase would not be appreciated very much. Focus on awareness, make your case. Do research you need to build your case. Roads are a local issue not a state issue (in Indiana for example, research shows that roads are a local problem. Keep using research to show that roads are a priority.
- Q. There has been a lot of talk about the tools and the different venues used to get messages out there, are there any general rules about positive vs. negative messages. Is this tied in with research to find out who your audience is?
- A. The tools you use will depend on the audience. There is no hard and fast rule. Use messages that resonant with the public. For example Detroit Public Schools are putting out positive ads that no one believes. In this case they should use negative advertisement to be believable.

